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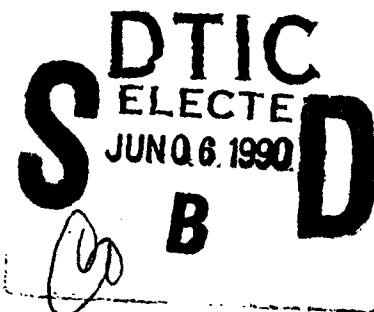
IMPLEMENTATION OF FM 25-100 IN THE HEAVY DIVISION

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL DOUGLAS F. WALTERS, IN

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IMPLEMENTATION OF FM 25-100 IN THE HEAVY DIVISION

An Individual Study Project
Intended for Publication

by

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U.S. Army War College
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FM 25-100, Training the Force, is the Army capstone manual on how to plan, execute, and assess training. It has been available in final form for about one and a half years (November 1988) but has been around in draft for at least another year prior to that. The current Chief of Staff, General Carl E. Vuono, has continually emphasized the importance of training and especially the use of FM 25-100. My purpose in this study is to assess how well the implementation of the Chief of Staff's guidance is progressing in a heavy division stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. The methodology employed was to interview selected principal division staff officers as well as current brigade and battalion commanders. This information was then argued by personal experience gained while commanding a battalion within the division. The results are presented using selected topics from FM 25-100. The division has attempted to fully implement the Chief of Staff's guidance, but has been hampered by operational test requirements and short fused taskings. Significant changes in operational style will have to be made at senior levels of command in the Army if the doctrine detailed in FM 25-100 is to be fully implemented.

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INTRODUCTION

FM 25-100, Training the Force, is the Army capstone manual on how to plan, execute, and assess training. It has been available in final form for about one and a half years (November 1988) but has been around in draft for at least another year prior to that. The current Chief of Staff, General Carl E. Vuono, has continually emphasized the importance of training and especially the use of FM 25-100. In the preface to the field manual he writes:

Training prepares soldiers, leaders, and units to fight and win in combat--the Army's basic mission. "Training the Force" is the Army's standardized training doctrine applicable throughout the force. It provides the necessary guidelines on how to plan, execute, and assess training at all levels... every senior leader is expected to know, understand, and apply the concepts in this manual.¹

My purpose is to assess how well the implementation of the Chief of Staff's guidance is progressing in a heavy division. I chose a heavy division stationed at Fort Hood, Texas, for several reasons. First, the current division commander assumed command about five months before the publication of FM 25-100. His previous assignment was with Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) headquarters where he had a significant influence on the writing and publication of the manual. Second, Fort Hood provides the best overall training opportunities for a heavy

division because of its vast maneuver area and many live fire ranges. Last, upon his arrival, the division commander announced that he was going to dedicate himself to implementing the tenets of FM 25-100.

I will look at the major elements of the training philosophy outlined in FM 25-100 and provide a status of how each is working within the division. This assessment will be based upon interviews with current and past brigade and battalion commanders as well as principal division staff officers. In addition, I have included recommendations for both changes within the field manual as well as changes in attitudes and policies within the Army.

TRAINING ENVIRONMENT AT FORT HOOD

In order to understand the information, opinions, and assessments presented, one must have knowledge of the unique training environment that exists at Fort Hood. Fort Hood is unique for several reasons. It is the only Army post where a Corps headquarters, two of its divisions, and most of its support units are collocated. In addition, Fort Hood provides the most extensive facilities for maneuver, live fire, and simulation available to a division at its home station. Because of the large number of different type units and facilities, Fort Hood is often chosen as the location for major operational tests; equipment and live fire exercises for Congressional delegations and foreign visitors; and many and varied studies of individual and unit behavior. Finally, the Texas National Guard maintains

the majority of its equipment at North Fort Hood and competes for use of the training facilities throughout the year.

The impact of these conditions on training is the creation of an environment of constant change. Changes are generated by a variety of events ranging from Army tests (both large and small), visits from foreign officials, Congressional delegations and staffers, members of industry, and staff college students throughout the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Each of these events requires a variety of unit assets. Assets for these types of events consist of static displays of equipment, ride-drive-shoot the M-1 tank or M-2 fighting vehicle, and/or battalion task force live fire exercises, to name a few. For a time, Fort Hood developed the nickname of the "National Testing Center" because of the number of on going and planned Army tests.

Another dimension of this complex situation is the large number of reserve component forces that conduct their annual training at Fort Hood each year. From April to the end of September each year, these reserve forces are given first priority on most maneuver areas and firing ranges. The impact of this policy is felt most by the two divisions as they attempt to prepare for summer National Training Center (NTC) rotations. Historically, one division needs most of the maneuver area in April and May while the other requires the same in July and August.

A complicating factor associated with the fight for resources is the constant turnover of personnel. Fort Hood units serve as feeders for units in Europe and Korea--a fact which has

result training levels well below 95% and turnover rates of eight to ten percent per month.

The result of all these factors at battalion and brigade level is a constant battle to protect scheduled training and maintain combat readiness.

BATTLE FOCUS, MISSION ESSENTIAL TASK LIST, BATTLE TASKS

Prior to the summer of 1988, the division's battle focus was geared to success at the NTC instead of a wartime contingency mission. As a result, mission essential task lists (METL) which existed in a portion of the battalions and brigades in the division reflected missions mostly directed towards fighting in a desert environment at the NTC. Few, if any, supporting battle tasks existed.² With the arrival of the new command group, the battle focus shifted quickly to fighting and winning in Europe. Each battalion and brigade, along with the division staff, went about the task of developing a comprehensive METL. Because these were accomplished simultaneously and had to be continuously coordinated, the process took approximately three months. The implementing battle tasks were developed at the same time but with some difficulty. At battalion and company level, these tasks were drawn almost verbatim from mission training plans (MTP) that were published and available. This reference material was not as helpful at brigade level and above. Much confusion among staff officers was generated as the relationship between subordinate battle tasks and higher unit METL was developed. This issue is still not totally resolved in the division.³

Presently, all units from division through company have established their METL and battle tasks. At least quarterly, they are evaluated for possible change and are assessed according to the trained (T), needs practice (P), untrained (U), or unknown (?) system established by FM 25-100.4. This redirection of the division's battle focus and requirement for detailed development of METL and battle tasks has had an extremely positive effect on the structure of training within the division.

LONG RANGE PLANNING

Long range planning at division level consisted of maintaining a two year training calendar. This was complemented by numerous personal interchanges between the division commander and brigade commanders and their staffs. The primary input to this process was the corps yearly training guidance and five year training calendar. Division staff officer confidence in this calendar was high for the first two years. The last three years were considered tentative at best. The corps training guidance was viewed as generally helpful but lacked the most important element, which was funding allocation. This lack of funding guidance accounted for most of the frustrations of the division staff.⁵

The division chose not to publish a yearly training guidance for Fiscal Year 1990, but has consistently published a quarterly guidance. This decision was a function of the commander's confidence that his subordinates knew and understood his long range goals. In fact, at brigade level, there was total

agreement that a yearly training guidance was unnecessary. This was not true at battalion level. The general feeling among those commanders was that the lack of a yearly guidance prevented a good understanding of the division commander's long range training goals.⁶ This break in communications apparently was a result of battalion level commanders not being exposed to the same level of guidance as that of their brigade commanders. In addition, brigade commanders tended to maintain a detailed calendar for the upcoming three months, with a more generalized calendar for months four, five, and six. The noteworthy exception to this was within the division artillery where planning was focused to eighteen months because of the directed cycle of nuclear evaluations.⁷

At division and brigade level, there was a high level of confidence in the first twelve months of the division planning calendar. Events scheduled were seen as occurring as planned or within a few days, plus or minus. The major complaint by brigade commanders was the lack of detail provided concerning planned command post exercises (CPX). The level of unit participation in scheduled CPX's was generally not made available until well within the ninety day planning window. As a result, training plans and resources routinely had to be modified.

Battalion commanders rarely, if ever, were furnished the division training calendar, so they were totally dependent on the

division quarterly training guidance and the brigade training calendar. Most brigade calendars covered six to nine months and, as a result, that was as far as a battalion commander could reasonably plan. Battalion commanders had very little confidence in the planned dates for any training event scheduled beyond the end of the present quarter. While division viewed an event date change a week on either side of the scheduled date as not significant, battalions considered it totally disruptive. Normally the result was that planned preparatory training was curtailed or pre-execution and recovery phases were not accomplished to standard.

The final complicating factor associated with long range planning was the continuing conflict between assessed training requirements based upon the unit METL and the multitude of training directives contained in Corps Regulation 350-1. According to the division staff, there were more than three hundred days per year of required training contained in the regulation as compared to less than two hundred and seventy-five available training days.⁸ This disconnect not only left little room for METL generated training but also created an impossible situation for each level of command. In fact, the Corps Regulation was viewed as a guide rather than a directive and caused conflict when the corps commander decided to focus on specific requirements.

SHORT RANGE PLANNING

Throughout the division, at all levels, quarterly training

calendars were maintained and used. Although this was generally true prior to the summer of 1988, it had now become an institution. Quarterly training guidances are religiously published down through battalion level. In the second month of each quarter, a series of brigade level training briefs were conducted for the division commander. These training briefs followed the guidance laid out in Chapter 3, FM 25-100. All brigade and separate battalion commanders, division principal and special staff officers, and the battalion commanders of the brigade conducting the training briefing attended. The principal purpose of the quarterly training briefing was to present to the division commander a detailed analysis of training requirements based upon unit METL coupled with the plan for meeting these requirements during the upcoming quarter. Battalion commanders and command sergeants major (CSM) were the primary briefers. The brigade commander and his CSM provided initial remarks and an overview of the brigade training plan. The desired outcome of each briefing was the establishment of a contract between the commanding general and the battalion commander. This informal verbal contract specified that the training briefed would be protected and funded by the division commander and therefore executed by the battalion commander.

Depending on what level of commander was interviewed, their opinion on whether or not this contract ever was executed differed. Universally at battalion level the feeling was that the commanding general tried in good faith to establish the

training contract but without much success. The primary problems were unknown funding levels and short fuse taskers. Rarely, if ever, did a battalion commander know his exact funding level prior to the quarterly training briefing. Often an estimate had been provided but it was approximately thirty days after the briefing that the exact funding was made available. As a result, battalion commanders tended to downscale or modify training right up to the point of execution.

At brigade level, commanders differed slightly in their opinions. Combat and combat support commanders agreed that if a contract was ever established, it was loose and tended to change significantly as the quarter progressed. Combat service support commanders believed that they were able to make and execute a training contract on a relatively frequent basis. This difference is somewhat a reflection of different levels of vulnerability to changes in funding and major taskings. Combat service support units were funded at a fairly constant rate for their internal unit training and received additional funds as appropriate according to the final approved training plan of the brigade they supported.

Unexpected or short fuse taskings were probably the single most destructive force to the establishment of the training contract. These varied in scope and duration but all had the same result; the planned training was cancelled or significantly modified. For example, Fort Hood was chosen as the site for the first multiple integrated laser engagement system (MILES)

enforced the Infantry fighting vehicle (IFV) range. In order to test the equipment and develop the proper training techniques, a battalion was tasked to provide a platoon and six IFV's for four weeks. First, this requirement was short fused--tasked five weeks prior to execution. Then, what began as an unexpected training opportunity for the platoon and its parent company quickly deteriorated, as the tasking extended past the initial requirement. Rather than four weeks, the platoon actually spent twelve weeks on the new range and missed numerous planned individual and collective training events. These changes had a ripple effect, causing the training of its parent company to be modified for the following two quarters.⁹

NEAR TERM PLANNING

Battalion three month training calendars were maintained across the division; but the events programmed, only loosely reflected what was actually executed. This situation changed markedly when weekly training meetings at battalion, company, and platoon level were required. As this former requirement, newly reinforced, became fact throughout the division, training calendars improved significantly. The division commander concurrently required that each company work towards publishing training schedules five weeks in advance. At first this appeared possible and several battalions actually were successful. Even so the division average never really exceeded three weeks.¹⁰ Again, the major stumbling block was unexpected taskings. In fact, as each battalion attempted to reach the five week goal, it

became increasingly apparent that the average tasking lead time was four or five weeks. This fact alone prevented anything as detailed as a training schedule from being published more than three weeks in advance. The battalions within the division continue to work toward their five week goal but fewer and fewer are able to reach pass three.

THE NATIONAL TRAINING CENTER

Since its development in 1982, NTC has become the premiere training opportunity for battalion task forces and brigades within the divisions of Forces Command (FORSCOM). As stated earlier, this realization actually caused brigade and battalion METL's in the division to be influenced by the peculiarities of the Mojave Desert. Once this tendency was reversed and the unit METL's reflected actual wartime contingency plans, the NTC, as a training event, became much more valuable. Prior to each of the two NTC rotations that the division was normally allocated each fiscal year, the commander of the brigade selected to go to the NTC was able to specify which of his METL tasks he wanted to train during the rotation. This allowed the brigade and, in fact, the rest of the division to directly train toward wartime requirements.

The rotation itself lasted approximately twenty days with fourteen actual field days. During the arrival and departure period (six days) the rotational brigade was able to practice the rail loading of large numbers of vehicles and CONEX's, along with

the procedures for drawing and turning in stored equipment. This provided an opportunity to train the whole process--alert, deployment, warfighting, and redeployment. Almost as beneficial as the rotation was the train-up conducted at Fort Hood. During the four month process of train-up, the rotational brigade conducted field training exercises from platoon through battalion task force. Also, individual and platoon tank and IFV qualification gunnery, company and battalion command field exercises, and numerous simulation assisted command post exercises were conducted. An added benefit was that the other brigade increased their own training proficiency by providing evaluation, opposing forces, and logistical assistance.¹¹

Combat service support units depended heavily on these NTC rotations to maintain field combat proficiency. Nowhere else could division, brigade, and battalion logistical areas be situated to reflect the actual distances expected during wartime. These time-distance relationships were critical to providing the training opportunities associated with resupply, maintenance, medical evacuation, and rear area security. In fact, combat service support commanders within the division agreed that until they experienced an NTC rotation, they did not really understand the wartime requirements of their units.¹²

TRAINING DISTRACTORS

FM 25-100 recommends that units employ some type of time management system in order to manage the large number of requirements that always compete with scheduled training. The

most frequently recommended system is known as red-amber-green.

This system is described in FM 25-100 as:

Organizations in green periods conduct planned training without distraction and external taskings. Units in red periods execute details and other administrative requirements and allow the maximum number of soldiers to take leaves.... Organizations in amber periods are assigned support taskings beyond the capability of those units in the red period, but commanders strive for minimal disruption to amber organizations training programs.¹³

This system does not exist in the division or, for that matter, at corps. At division level, the absence of the third maneuver brigade has prevented the adoption of this system. With only two similar brigades, both suffer unacceptable training loss regardless of color assigned. In addition, taskings are not equal in size and duration so, it is difficult to decide which unit should rightfully be tasked. This dilemma has resulted in a situation where only the two battalions scheduled for the next NTC rotation were protected. All the other battalions were equally vulnerable.¹⁴

The same situation appears to exist at corps level except without NTC protection for any unit. Both divisions are subject to taskings at any time, apparently without regard to scheduled training. According to a division staff officer, FORSCOM staff officers use a forty-six day standard lead time as a tasking guideline so, there is no hope of planning and locking in training a quarter in advance.¹⁵ An example of the problems caused by late requirements occurred just prior to the most

recent division gunnery period. The division developed its gunnery plan prior to the beginning of the fiscal year. It specified that infantry and armor battalions would qualify tank and IFV crews, at an interval of once every six months; platoons, once a year. All units within the division developed their own training plans to support this direction and prepared accordingly. Less than two weeks prior to actual shooting, guidance from corps level directed two platoon qualifications a year and dictated that the division plan be changed immediately. This requirement impacted on every unit in the division and caused wholesale training schedule changes. As a result, insufficiently trained crews and platoons were forced to shoot qualification.

Another type of training distractor common at Fort Hood was the visit of Congressional delegations or senior foreign officers. The division rarely was tasked to support this type of mission more than thirty days in advance. To further complicate matters, the exact type of event to be observed was also directed. The training already scheduled was rarely acceptable. The final result was that a battalion lost a number of planned training days.

CONCLUSIONS

Over the last year and a half the tenets of FM 25-100 have been adopted and practiced within the division insofar as possible. The METL and battle task development process has been completed and a system exists that provides for periodic updating

as necessary. Probably the most significant change in the way the division assesses training has come with the use of the classification technique-- trained, needs practice, and untrained as applied to battle tasks. This system has caused all leaders, from squad/tank crew to commanders, to make an evaluation of the training level of their soldiers prior to and at the end of the training event. This evaluation is then used to establish future training needs and to determine specific shortfalls.

Short term planning and its association with the quarterly training briefing has greatly enhanced the division's ability to execute training events to standard. Even considering the lack of funding guidance available when the plan is established, the process has caused battalion and company commanders to work hard at planning logical training events that have a direct linkage to their METL and battle tasks. The very positive result of this emphasis on short range planning can best be seen in the increased quality of published training schedules. Although no unit really ever sustained the five week goal, most were able to maintain three weeks and then actually execute what was published.

The areas that appear to need the most emphasis are grouped around long range planning and training distractor management. The division staff needs to distribute the division long range calendar to all battalion commanders at least quarterly. This will provide a common start point for each as they attempt to program battalion and company level training. In addition, the

lack of a published yearly training guidance denied leaders below brigade level the opportunity to understand the division commander's long range goals. This disconnect prevented battalion commanders from maximizing the use of available training time in support of the division commander's objectives.

The inability to manage training distractors probably was the major reason most units continually were unable to achieve their training objectives. At division level, the lack of some type of system had the effect of disturbing all of the units all of the time. In fact, the most completely successful events from an execution standpoint were the events associated with the distractors themselves. Most of the planned training was disrupted sufficiently to prevent total training to standard.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The senior leadership of the Army has got to support the principles outlined in FM 25-100 with actions as well as words. Presently, most senior commanders will quickly announce their full agreement with the Army's training doctrine, but their actions generally send a different signal. This is best demonstrated in the way that units are tasked to host visiting dignitaries or conduct demonstrations. There appears to be no consideration given to planned training or the effect on the soldiers involved. Staff officers probably contribute to this situation to a greater degree, but their commanders seem to be willing to either ignore the ultimate result or condone it.

Originators of taskers must be held responsible for the final outcome.

In order to further assist in the reduction of training distractors, senior commanders should be prevented from changing short term training plans upon assumption of command. In fact, it would be extremely helpful if corps and division commanders were prohibited from changing any training event for the first six months of their command tour.

The explanation of the relationship between unit METL and higher's battle tasks as presented in FM 25-100 should be re-examined. Most commanders do not understand either the explanation or the intent. The general consensus is that METL's should support each other from higher to lower level of command and battle tasks should be developed to support each METL. Any other relationship between METL and battle tasks between different levels of command should occur naturally.

ENDNOTES

1. U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 25-100, Training the Force, Washington, November 1988, p. i.
2. Interview with a Maneuver Brigade Commander, 8 November 1989. (Names of commanders and staff are not included in order to provide confidentiality)
3. Interview with a Division Staff Officer, 21 November 1989.
4. Interview with a Division Staff Officer, 20 November 1989.
5. Ibid.
6. Interview with a Maneuver Battalion Commander, 20 November 1989.
7. Interview with a Combat Support Brigade Commander, 12 December 1989.
8. Interview with a Division Staff Officer, 21 November 1989.
9. Interview with a Maneuver Brigade Commander, 22 November 1989.
10. Interview with a Division Staff Officer, 20 November 1989.
11. Ibid.
12. Interview with a Combat Service Support Brigade Commander, 22 November 1989.
13. U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 25-100, Training the Force, Washington, November 1988, p. 3-9.
14. Interview with a Division Staff Officer, 21 November 1989.
15. Ibid.